

May 8-13, 2000 is national Drinking Water Week

Tests for drinking water from private wells

When should I test my well water?

There are several tests that, if done periodically, can help owners of private wells determine whether they have safe, clean drinking water. State well construction codes require new wells be tested before use. Periodic testing will confirm the quality of your well water. You should consider testing anytime you notice a change in odor or taste.

Note: If you have any questions regarding how to request a water test or need assistance interpreting the results of a test, contact a water supply specialist at a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) office.

The two most important types of well tests, according to the DNR, are for bacteria and nitrate.

Bacteria

Total coliform bacteria are microorganisms found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals, as well as in soil, on vegetation, and in surface water runoff. The presence of total coliform bacteria in a water supply indicates that there may be other bacteria

present, but only 1 out of 10 Wisconsin private wells with total coliforms also test positive for *E. coli*. Unlike total coliforms, *E. coli* are specific to the lower intestines of warm-blooded animals, and indicate fecal contamination.

Bacteria washed into the ground by rain or melting snow are usually filtered out as water percolates through the soil. However, poorly-constructed or unsealed wells, fractured rock outcroppings, sinkholes, and quarries may provide a path for bacteria to enter groundwater.

Drinking water drawn from private wells should be tested for the presence of bacteria at least once a year, or any time there is a change in taste, odor, color, or appearance of the well water.

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Details of revised Comm 83,
subchapters I-III, and excerpts
from the In-Ground Component
Manual - Pages 9-19.

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